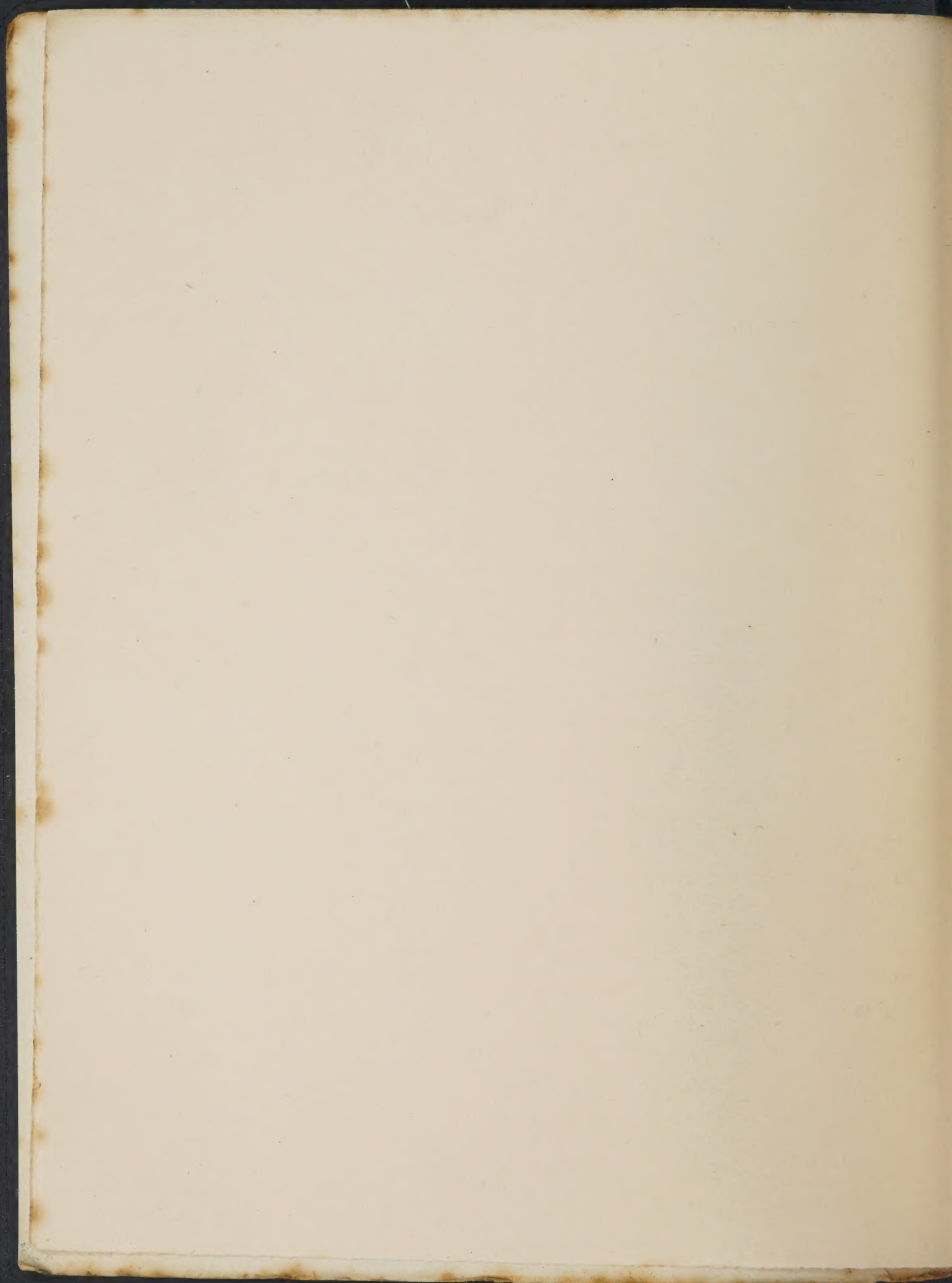


Old
English Literature.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN the lists of Nicholas Breton's productions this poem is attributed to him, but without the slightest evidence to support the position: it does not bear his name or initials, it was not even published by a stationer whom he was in the habit of employing, and it seems hardly likely that the same pen would write and print, and in the same year, this pious "Passion of a discontented Mind," and "Old Madcaps new Gallimawfry made into a merry Mess of Mingle-mangle." The inconsistency is, however, possible, though not probable; and the style of what follows is superior to Breton's usual manner. Some of the stanzas are as powerful and eloquent as any that Southwell left behind him; and were we to form a conjecture, we should be much more disposed to give it to him, as a posthumous effusion, than to assign it to such a money-making pen as that of the author of "The Soul's Harmony," or "Wonders worth the Hearing," both of which, like the work in our hands, made their appearance in 1602. Were we to accept the tract now reprinted as the work of Breton, it would make the fourth effusion of his muse published in the same year. In "The Passion of a discontented Mind" there is certainly little poetry, properly so called, but much religious fervour and piety.

We never saw more than a single copy of the edition we have

used, but it was reprinted in 1621, and of that impression two exemplars appear to remain to us. We apprehend that it is unique in the form in which we have reproduced it.

The printer's initials, T. C., are those of Thomas Creede, one of the best typographers of his day for popular productions; but, perhaps, the manuscript he used was old and illegible, and he certainly made some obvious omissions and blunders: we have ventured to place between brackets one or two words, necessary to the sense, as well as to the versification; but we have left other errors of the press in our text—such as “proceed” for *precede* in the third stanza, and “fetch” for *filch* in the last stanza but one. These, we are persuaded, are misreadings by the old compositor, which some critics of our day may like to see, if not to preserve. Oversights of the kind now and then enable us to correct important mistakes in other authors.

One obvious purpose of “The Passion of a discontented Mind” was to counteract the effect of the looser love-literature of the day; and we know, from his own testimony, that this was an object which Southwell had much at heart. Nevertheless, some portions of what follows are weaker, more languid, and more common-place, than what generally proceeded from his vigorous intellect.

J. P. C.

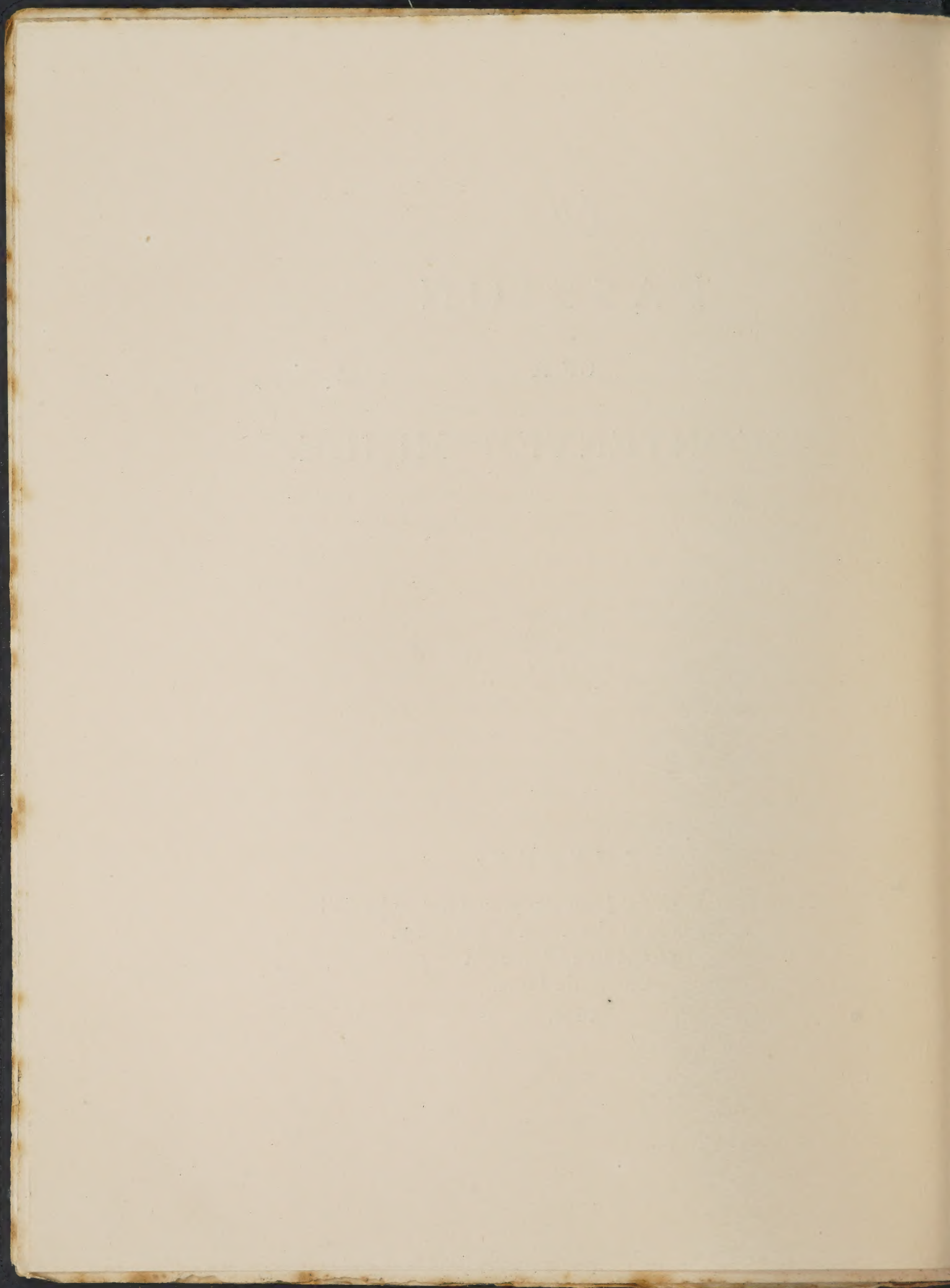
THE
PASSION
OF A
DISCONTENTED MINDE.



L O N D O N :

Printed by T. C. for John Baily, and are to be sold
at his shop at the doore of the Office
of the fixe Clarkes in
Chancerie Lane.

1602.



THE PASSION
OF
A DISCONTENTED MINDE.

FROM silent night, true register of moanes ;
From saddest soule, consum'd with deepest finnes ;
From heart quite rent with sighes and heavy groanes,
My wailing Muse her wofull worke beginnes :
And to the world brings tunes of sad dispaire,
Sounding nought else but sorrow, griefe, and care.

Sorrow, to see my sorrowes cause augmented,
And yet lesse sorrowfull, were my sorrowes more ;
Griefe, that my griefe with griefe is not prevented,
For griefe it is must ease my grieved fore.
Thus griefe and sorrow care's but how to grieve,
For griefe and sorrow must my cares relieve.

The wound fresh bleeding must be stancht with teares,
Teares cannot come, unlesse some griefe proceed ;
Griefes come but slacke, which doth encrease my feares,
Feares, least for want of helpe I still should bleed.
Do what I can to lengthen my lives breath,
If teares be wanting I shall bleed to death.

Thou deepest searcher of each secret thought,
Infuse in me thy all affecting grace ;
So shall my workes to good effects be brought,
While I peruse my ugly finnes a space :
 Whose staining filth so spotted hath my soule,
 As nought will waste, but teares of inward dole.

O! that the learned Poets of this time,
(Who in a love-sicke line so well indite)
Would not consume good wit in hateful rime,
But would with care some better subject write :
 For if their musicke please in earthly things,
 Well would it found if straind with heav'nly strings.

But woe it is to see fond worldlings use,
Who most delight in things that vaineest be,
And without feare worke vertues foule abuse,
Scorning foules rest, and all true pietie :
 As if they made account never to part
 From this fraile life, the pilgrimage of smart.

Such is the nature of our foolish kinde,
When practiz'd sinne hath deeply taken roote :
The way to penance due is hard to finde,
Repentance held a thing of litle boote ;
 For contrite teares, foules health, and angels joy,
 Most men account a meere phantastike toy.

Ill working use, devourer of all grace,
The fretting moeth that wasteth foules chiefe blisse ;
The slye close thiefe that lurkes in every place,

Filching by peece-meale till the whole be his ;
How many are deceived by thy baite,
T' account their finnes as trifles of no waight !

O curfed custome ! causing mischief still,
Too long thy craft my fences hath misse-led :
Too long have I bin slave unto thy will,
Too long my foule on bitter sweets hath fed :
Now surfetting with thy hell poisoned cates,
In deepe repent her former folly hates.

And humbly comes with sorrow-rented hart,
With blubbred eies, and hands uprear'd to heaven,
To play a poore lamenting Mawdlines part,
That would weepe streames of bloud to be forgiven :
But (oh) I feare mine eies are drain'd so drie,
That though I would, yet now I cannot crie.

If any eie, therefore, can spare a teare
To fill the wel-springs that must wet my cheeks,
O ! let that eye to this sad feast draw neare ;
Refuse me not, my humble foule befeeks :
For all the teares mine eyes have ever wept,
Were now too litle had they all bin kept.

I see my finnes arraign'd before my face,
I see their number passe the moathes in funne,
I see that my continuance in this place
Cannot be long ; and all that I have done
I see the judge before my face hath laid,
At whose sterne lookes all creatures are afraid.

If be be juſt, my foule condemned is ;
 And juſt he is, what then may be expected,
 But baniſhment from everlaſting bliſſe ?
 To live, like curſed *Caine*, baſe, vile, abjecteſt :
 He in his rage his brothers bloud did ſpill,
 I, more unkind, mine owne foules life do kill.

O! could mine eyes ſend trickling teares amaine,
 Never to ceaſe till my eternall night,
 Till this eye-floud his mercie might obtaine,
 Whom my defaults have baniſht from his fight,
 Then could I bleſſe my happy time of crying ;
 But ah! too ſoone my barren ſprings are drying.

Thriſe happie ſinner was that bleſſed faint,
 Who, though he fell with puffe of woman's blaſt,
 Went forth and wept with many a bitter plaint,
 And by his teares obtained grace at laſt :
 Wretched I, have falne, of mine accord,
 Ten thouſand times againſt the living Lord.

Yet cannot ſtraine one true repentant teare
 To gaine the bliſſe from which my foule is baniſht :
 My flintie heart ſome forrowing doth forbear,
 And from my ſence all true remorce is vaniſht ;
 For heart and ſence are cloyd with dregs of finne,
 And theres no place for grace to enter in.

No place (deare Lord) unleſſe thy goodneſſe pleaſe
 To pittie him that worſt deſerves of any,
 And in thy tender mercie grant him eaſe,

As thou tofore hast mercie shew'd to many ;
Yet none of those do equall me in finne :
Oh ! how may I hope mercie then to winne ?

The traitor *Judas*, heire borne to perdition,
Who for a trifle did his Lord betray,
In equall doome deserveth more remission,
Then my defaults can challenge any way :
He sold him once, that once for gaine was done ;
I oftentimes, yet lesse then nothing wonne.

The bloudie minded Jewes, in furie mad
Untill on Christ their cruell rage was fed,
In their fell anger more compassion had
Then I, for whom his harmlesse blood was shed :
Their hellish spite within a day was past,
My sinfull fit doth all my lifetime last.

For ev'ry stripe that he from them did take,
A thousand deadly finnes have I committed ;
And ev'ry wound as deepe a wound did make,
As did the cords wherwith my Christ was whipped :
Oh hatefull caitiffe, parricide most vile,
Thus (with my finne) his pure blood to defile !

O finne ! first parent of mans ever woe,
The distance large that severs hell and heaven ;
Sences confounder, foules chiefe overthrow,
Grafted by men, not by the grafter given :
Consuming canker, wasting foules chiefe treasure,
Onely to gaine a litle trifling pleasure.

Happie were man if sinne had never bin,
 Thrife happie now, if sinne he would forsake ;
 But happier farre, if for his wicked sinne
 He would repent, and hartie sorrow make,
 Leaving this drosse and fleshly delectation,
 To gaine in heav'n a lasting habitation.

There is the place wherein all sorrowes die,
 Where joy exceeds all joyes that ever were ;
 Where Angels make continuall harmony,
 The minde set free from care, distrust, or feare :
 There all receive all joyfull contentation,
 Happied by that most heav'nly contemplation.

Nowe see (alas) the change we make for sinne !
 In stead of heav'n, hell is become our lot ;
 For blessed faints, damned fiends we ever win,
 For rest and freedome, lasting bondage got :
 For joy, content, eternall love and peace,
 Griefe, dispaire, hate, [and] jarres that never cease.

The worme of conscience still attendeth on us,
 Telling each houre, each instant we shall die ;
 And that our finnes cannot be parted from us,
 But where we are, thither they likewise flie :
 Still urging this, that death we have deserved,
 Because we fled from him we should have served.

What greater sinne can touch a humane hart ?
 What hellish furie can be worse tormented ?
 What sinner lives that feeleth not a part

Of this sharpe plague, unlesse he have repented ?
And yet repentance surely is but vaine,
Without full purpose not to sinne againe.

And is it not then [our] plaine follie's error,
To covet that that brings with it contempt,
And makes us live in feare, distrust, and terror,
Hating at last the thing we did attempt ?
For never sinne did yet so pleasing taste,
But lustful flesh did loath it when 'twas past.

Witness my wofull foule, which well can tell,
In highest top of sinne's most fresh delight
Although my frailtie suffred me to dwell,
Yet being past, I loath'd it with despight ;
But like the swine, I fed mine owne desire,
That being cleane still coveteth the mire.

So greedie is mans beastly appetite,
To follow after dunghill pleasures still,
And feed on carrion like the ravening kite,
Not caring what his hungry maw doth fill ;
But worketh evermore his wills effect,
Without restraint, controlement, or respect.

O ! why should man, that beares the stamp of heaven,
So much abase heavens holy will and pleasure ?
O ! why was fence and reason to him given,
That in his sinne cannot containe a measure ?
He knowes he must account for every sinne,
And yet committeth sins that countlesse bin.

This to peruse (deare God) doth kill my foule,
 But that thy mercie quickneth it againe.
 O! heare me, Lord, in bitterneffe of dole,
 That of my finnes do prostrate here complaine;
 And at thy feet, with *Mary*, knocke for grace,
 Though wanting *Maries* tears to wet my face.

She, happy finner, saw her life misse-led,
 At sight whereof her inward heart did bleed,
 To witnes with her, outward teares were shed.
 O blessed faint, and ô most blessed deed!
 But wretched I, that see more finnes than she,
 Nor grieve within, nor yet weepe outwardly.

When she had lost thy prefence but one day,
 The want was such her heart could not sustaine,
 But to thy tombe alone she tooke her way,
 And there with sighes and teares she did complaine:
 Nor from her sense once moov'd or stirr'd was shee,
 Untill againe she got a sight of thee.

But I have lost thy prefence all my daies,
 And still am slacke to see thee as I should;
 My wretched foule in wicked sinne so staies,
 I am unmeet to see thee, though I would:
 Yet, if I could with teares thy comming tend,
 I know I should (as she) finde thee my friend.

Teares are the key that ope the way to blisse,
 The holy water quenching heav'ns quicke fire;
 The attonement true twixt God and our amisse;

The angels drinke, the blessed faints desire :
The joy of Christ, the balme of grieved hart,
The spring of life, the ease of ev'ry smart.

The second King' of *Israel* by succession,
When with *Uriahs* wife he had offended,
In bitter teares bewaild his great transgression,
And by his teares found grace, and so repented :
He, night and day, in weeping did remaine ;
I, night nor day, to shew one teare take paine.

And yet my finnes, in greatnesse and in number,
Farre his exceed ; how comes it then to passe,
That my repentance should so farre be under,
And graces force, deare God, is as it was ?
Truth is, that I, although I have more need,
Do not, as he, so truly weepe indeed.

O ! wherefore is my steely heart so hard ?
Why am I made of mettall unrelenting ?
Why is all ghostly comfort from me bard ?
Or, to what end do I deferre repenting ?
Can lustfull flesh or flattering world perfwade me,
That I can scape the power of him that made me ?

No, no : the secret Searcher of all hearts
Both sees and knowes each deed that I have done,
And for each deed wil pay me home with smart.
No place can serve his will decreed to shunne ;
I should deceive my selfe to thinke that he
For sinne would punish others, and not me.

Our first borne fire, first breeder of mans thrall,
 For one bare sinne was of perfection reft,
 And all mankinde were banisht by his fall
 From Paradife, and unto sorrow left :

If he for one, and all for him feelee paine,
 Then, for so many what should I sustaine ?

The angels made to attend on God in glorie,
 Were thrust from heav'n, and only for one sinne,
 That but in thought (for so records the storie)
 For which they still in lasting darknes bin :

If those, once glorious, thus tormented be,
 I (basest slave) what will become of me ?

What will become of me, that not in thought,
 In thought alone, but in each word and deed,
 A thousand thousand deadly finnes have wrought,
 And still do worke ; whereat my heart doth bleed ?
 For even now, in this my sad complaining,
 With new made sins my flesh my soule is staining.

O ! that I were remov'd to some close cave,
 Where all alone retired from delight,
 I might my fighes and teares untroubled have,
 And never come in wretched worldlings fight,
 Whose ill bewitching company still brings
 Deepe provocation, whence great danger springs.

Ill company, the cause of many woes,
 The sugred baite, that hideth poysoned hooke ;
 The rocke unseen that shipwrackt soules o'rethrowes ;

The weeping crocodile that kills with looke ;
The readiest steppe to ruine and decay,
Graces confounder, and helles nearest way.

How many foules do perish by thy guile!
How many men without all feare frequent
Thy deadly haunts, where they in pleasure smile,
Taking no care such dangers to prevent,
But live like Belials, unbrideled or untamed,
Not looking they shall for their faults be blamed !

Alas, alas ! too wretched do we live,
That carelesly thus worke our owne confusion,
And to our wills such libertie do give ;
Ay me ! it is the diuels meere illusion
To flatter us with such sence-pleasing traines,
That he thereby may take us in his chaines.

This well foresaw good men of auntient time,
Which made them shunne th' occasions of foule finne,
Knowing it was the nurse of every crime,
And, fyren-like, would traine fond worldlings in ;
Alluring them with shewe of musickes sound,
Untill on finnes deepe shelve their foules be drownd.

But he is held no fotiable man,
In this corrupted age, that shall refuse
To keepe the cursed company now and than ;
Nay, but a foole, unlesse he seeme to chuse
Their fellowship, and give them highest place
That vildest live, and furthest off from grace.

But better tis, believe me, in my triall
 To shun such hel-hounds, factors of the divell;
 And give them leave to grudge at your deniall,
 Then to partake with such in sinne and evill:
 For if that God (in justice) then should slay us,
 From hell and horror, who (alas!) could stay us?

Good God! the just (as he himselfe hath spoken)
 Should scarce be saved, ô terror unremoveable!
 What, then, should they that never had a token,
 Or signe of grace (soules comfort most behoveable)
 But gracelesse liv'd, and all good deeds did hate,
 What hope of them that live in such a state?

O! who will give me teares, that I may waile,
 Both nights and daies, the dangers I have past;
 My soule, my soule, tis much for thy availe,
 That thou art gotten from these straits at last:
 O joy! but in thy joy mixe teares withall,
 That thou hast time to say, Lord, heare me call.

I might as others (Lord) have perished
 Amid my finnes and damnable delights;
 But thou (good God), with care my soule hath cherished,
 And brought it home to taste on heav'nly lights.
 Ay me! what thankses, what service can I render
 To thee that of my safetie art so tender?

Now do I curse the time I ever went
 In finnes blacke path, that leadeth to damnation:
 Now do I hate the houres I have misse-spent

In ydle vice, neglecting foules salvation,
And to redeeme the time I have misse-worne,
I wish this houre I were againe new borne.

But vaine it is, as faith the wisest man,
To call againe the day that once is past :
O! let me see what best is for me than,
To gaine thy favour whilst my life doth last ;
That in the next I may but worthy be,
Ev'n in the meanest place to waite on thee.

I will, as did the prodigall sonne sometime,
Upon my knees, with heartie true contrition,
And weeping eyes, confesse my former crime ;
And humbly begge, upon my lowe submission,
That thou wilt not of former faults detect me,
But, like a loving father, now respect me.

Or, as the wife that hath her husband wronged,
So will I come with feare and blushing cheekes,
For giving others what to thee belonged ;
And say, my king, my lord, and spouse most meeke,
I have defil'd the bed that thou didst owe :
Forgive me this, it shall no more be so.

Yet, for the world can witnes mine abuse,
Ile hide my face from face that witcht mine eies ;
These gracelesse eyes that had my bodies use,
Till it be withred with my very cries :
That when my wrinckles shall my sorrowes tell,
The world may say, I joy'd not, though I fell.

Ev'n thus will I in sorrowing spend my breath,
And spot my face with never-dying teares,
Till aged wrinckles, messengers of death,
Have purchasde mercie, and remov'd my feares :
 And then the world within my lookes shall read
 The piteous wracke unbrideled finne hath bred.

And that which was a pleasure to behold,
Shalbe to me an ever-griping paine ;
All my misdeeds shall one and one be told,
That I may see what tyrants have me flaine :
 And when I have thus mustred them apart,
 I will display on each a bleeding hart.

And leaft my teares should faile me at most need,
Before the face of faith Ile fixe my Saviours passion,
And see how his most pretious side did bleed,
And note his death and torments, in such fashion
 As never man the like did undertake ;
 For freely he hath done it for my sake.

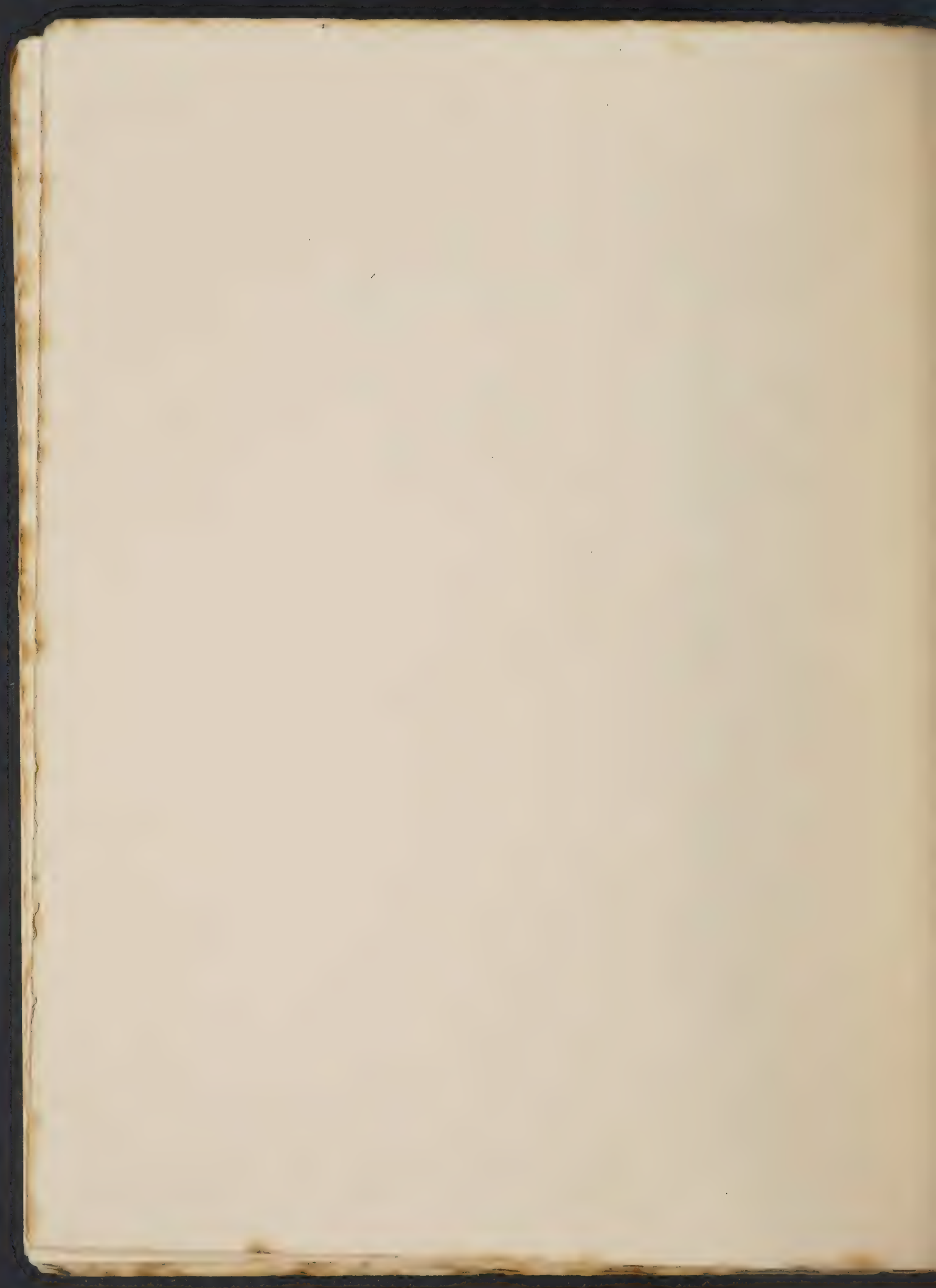
If this his kindnesse and his mercie showne,
Cannot provoke me unto tender cryme ;
Then will I backe againe turne to mine owne,
Mine owne finne[s], cause of this his cruell dying :
 And if for them no teares mine eyes can find,
 Sighs shal cause tears, tears make my poore eies blind.

No farre fetcht story have I now brought home,
Nor taught to speake more language then his mothers ;
No long done poem is from darknesse come

To light againe: it's ill to fetch from others :
The song I sing is made of heart-bred sorrow,
Which penfive Muse from pining foule doth borrow.

I sing, not I, of wanton love-ficke laies,
Of trickling toyes to feed fantasticke eares,
My Muse respects no flattrring tatling praise ;
A guiltie conscience this sad passion beares :
My finne ficke foule, with sorrow woe begone,
Lamenting thus a wretched deed mis-done.

FINIS.





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